prototypes of Main Battle Tank (MBT) ARJUN have been fabricated These tanks have undergone R&D-cum-users trials for automotive and weapon systems. In addition, two pre-production series tanks have also been manufactured by Heavy Vehicle Factory-Avadi for troop trials. These tanks have recently undergone extensive user assisted technical trials at Balasore and Suratgarh. The results obtained are encouraging. Four more pre-production series tanks, two each from BEML and BHEL, are likely to be ready by Dec. 92.

(b) MBT ARJUN is expected to be ready for bulk production after completion of trials in 1993.

(c) The project was sanctioned originally in 1974 at a cost of Rs. 15.50 crores. The present sanctioned cost of the project stands at Rs. 280.80 crores.

(d) (i) Change in qualitative requirement by the Army.

(ii) Requirement of the additional prototypes.

(iii) Additional requirement of pre-production series tanks.

(iv) More realistic asessment of technical and user trials.

Inland Marketing and Export of Handloom Cloth

*177. SHRI S. K. T. RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state what steps are being taken to widen the scope of inland marketing and export of handloom cloth?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT): Government of India is taking a number of teps to widen the scope of marketing of handloom cloth for both internal consumption as well as for the purposes of exports.

Steps for improving internal marketing of handloom products include assistance to eligible handloom producing/marketing agencies under the scheme called Market Development Assistance (MDA). Central Government provides annually over Rs. 50 crores for the scheme which is supplemented by a matching amount by the State Governments. Government of India organises exhibitions in metropolitan towns to promote sale of handloom goods. This is in addition to similar exhibitions organised by State Governments and their bodies. To improve off-take of handloom products, Central Government and many State Governments have standing instructions which provided for priority in procurement for handloom textile items procured by Government Ministries Departments, Undertakings and Organisations. Assistance is also provided for setting up of marketing complexes for improvement in marketability. A scheme called National Design Collection programme is also under implementation to introduce new designs and to improve marketing of handloom items.

Government have been taking a number of steps for boosting handloom exports like sponsoring sales-cum-study teams, participation in fairs in major markets, releasing advertisements in foreign trade magazines grant of duty-drawback and appropriate quota policy measures.

The Development Commissioner for Handlooms is operating a scheme for providing assistance for modernisation rennovation/purchase of looms for improving productivity and quality of fabrics produced on handlooms. The 23 Weavers' Service Centres and 3 Indian Institutes of Handloom Technology spread over the country are contributing towards development of new designs, improvement in weaving and processing technology, training in handloom skills etc. Besides the Handloom Export Promotion Council, Madras is undertaking a programme for upgradation of handloom production facilities mainly for exports in coordination with the Weavers' Service Centres, Directorate of Handlooms and other concerned organisations.